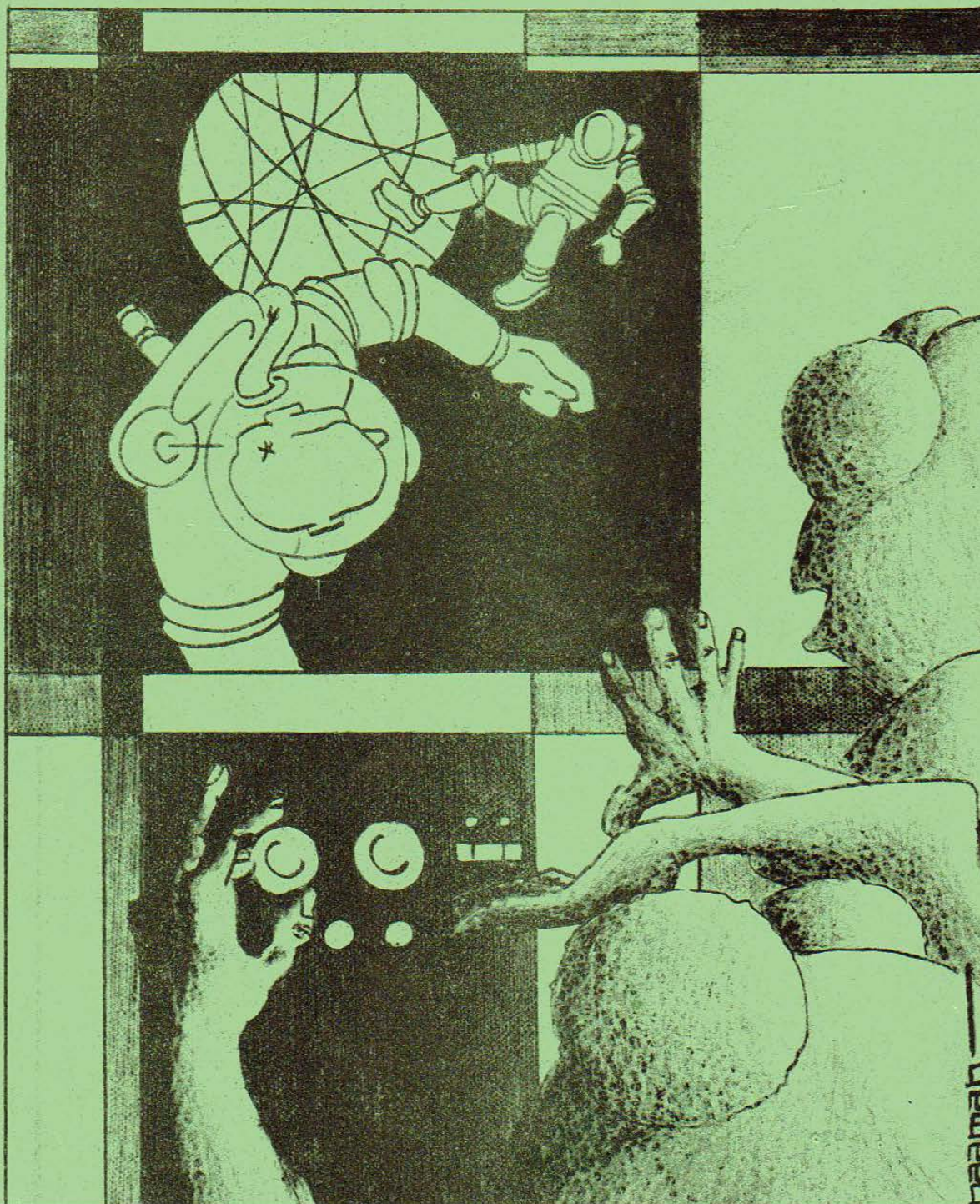


VANATIONS

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VANATIONS is an EGOBOOB Publication; affiliated with Fan Variety Enterprises; and is a 7th Fandom fanzine.

Editor and Publisher:

Norman G. Browne
13906 - 101A Ave.,
Edmonton, Alta., Canada.

Woth this issue, VANATIONS suspends publication, and there may never be another issue. Subscribers please take note of this fact. Fan-editors please note that all future fanzines received by me will be accepted as complimentary copies. But if you wish to continue sending me your zine, you will recieve high priority on any material I write and any fanzines I publish. FILLER is not for trade.

Payment for this issue is as usual on the PAR system. For those new to the game, just send what you think the issue is worth - but anything under 10¢ I consider an insult and anything over 25¢ hurts my concience.

Material of all types is still solicited but on a three months option basis. In other words, if your material is not published by me within three months of receipt, it will be returned with my thanks and apologies.

This issue is dedicated to Harlan Ellison; who conceived, sponsored and invited me to the HEcon. Ironically, he is also responsible for the month delay in this issue.....

FILLER #345



DOPRI



CONFESSIONS OF A FAN EDITOR

Let us not say that I haven't done a good job editing VANATIONS, but rather let us say that I haven't done the best job possible. I have certain assets and faculties; I have knowledge, experience and contacts that I have used and could have used in editing VANATIONS. I could have made VANATIONS my whole world, my sole interest, my ultimate ambition - but I didn't.

That is why I am not a good fan editor.

Instead of putting all I could into VANATIONS, I was content to just make it a fanzine - then a good fanzine; and then stop there. I used just enough of my faculties, knowledge, experience and contacts to make VANATIONS a good fanzine instead of putting my whole being into it and making it the best fanzine.

There are a number of things that I could have done or used to make VANATIONS the best fanzine, and of them all, I used only three - and made VANATIONS only a good fanzine. These three things are LUCK, CREATIVE IMAGINATION, and EDITORIAL POLICY. Let us examine more closely how these three things molded and shaped VANATIONS into the fanzine you now know it as.

My cover format was luck. I took the photo that went on my first cover into the printer and the clerk looked at it and asked me what format I wanted it done in. I looked at her blankly for a moment and then took a sheet of scrap paper and scribbled a few lines and a name on it in pencil. That scribbling could have been interpreted in any number of different ways, some good and some bad. Instead, it turned out to be a unique, esthetic and stylish cover format. That was luck.

My first issue was to have been all multilithed. When buying the multilith plates, I learned that artwork could also be done on multi plates by drawing with a special pencil. I had three plates done that way. As it happened, none of the rest of the typed plates turned out and I had to scrap them and use mimeo. The artwork was the only multilithed work run in that first issue. So struck was I by the effectiveness, simplicity and cheapness of that form of artwork that I carried it on through succeeding issues. That was luck.

Very seldom during my career as editor of VANATIONS have I done direct soliciting for material. Thus, the majority of the material that I have printed came out of a clear blue sky; was printed, and received high praise. That was luck.

Running full-page, multilithed artwork was part luck and part creative imagination. The now famous PAR system was pure creative imagination. What The Censor Missed, Borothy Bix, You Asked?, were all creative imagination. The What S-F Means to Me contest was creative imagination. So also were the headings DOPRI and OMPTI and many other things scattered throughout VANATIONS.

Most fanzines are distributed to people who are active fans and higher. Therefore, they are written and produced and aimed at that level of fan. I wanted to produce a fanzine that could be easily read and understood by anyone, no matter what level they were in fandom. Most fanzines can be easily understood if the reader has a certain amount of knowledge and experience in fandom. I wanted a fanzine that could be understood by a person having no knowledge and experience in fandom. A good friend and buddy of mine has made a success with his fanzine by printing material to appeal to anyone. Thus, no matter how little your knowledge in fandom, you can find something in his fanzine that you can understand. I tried to go a little further than that; I wanted everyone to be able to understand everything in VANATIONS. That was the first major editorial policy that shaped the destiny of this magazine.

Many fan editors, knowingly or unknowingly, set up a wall or gulf between themselves and their readers. One gets the impression when reading their fanzine that, "I am the mighty fan-editor and you are but lowly readers." Certainly, I grant you that a wide gulf exists between the editor and the readers of a prozine but that should not be the case with a fanzine. A prozine editor has a large circulation and therefore has to be impersonal and objective to a large extent. Not everyone can become a prozine editor, either.

But a fanzine is different. Anyone can be a fanzine editor; therefore you are as good as I; therefore why should I act like I am better than you or that you can't do what I am doing? Other fan editors treat you as part of an unintelligent, intangible mass. I try to treat you as a personal friend and as an individual and not just a name on a mailing list. Where other editors are cold and aloof; I try to be friendly, frank and intimate. Where other editors set up a wall or a gulf; I try to create a rapport. That is my second major editorial policy and it also helped to shape the destiny of VANATIONS.

These three things, then; Luck, Creative Imagination, and Editorial Policy, made VANATIONS the fanzine you know it as. And I hope you enjoyed it during its brief life as much as I enjoyed producing it.

VANATIONS #6 NOTES:

About six weeks ago, I recieved a story by Harlan Ellison to go in this issue. But, about that time, I wrote an article myself that I badly wanted to put in this issue. But in order to put my article in, I needed an accompanying article to go with it. So I sent down my article to Ellison and asked him to do the accompanying article. In due time, he returned my article, asked for the return of his story and promised to do the report I needed. That was five weeks ago.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

".....because it's there!...."

WOULD YOU --

by JACK HARNESS

The SatEvePost has been printing a peculiar type of questionnaire in Post Scripts lately. The object is to pose the reader in an unusual situation and offer him three choices of action. While this is not on the high plane of Campbell's "fight or flight" reaction-pattern, still the possibilities are so interesting that I decided to make one up for you. Score yourself on the following, then, which is specially adjusted for fandom.

1. - The letter-fued you've been waging suddenly develops into an all out war and he notifies you that he's mailing a bomb, so there, smarty, would you --

- (1) Refuse to pay your postage bills so that the post office has no choice but to cease delivering mail to you?
- (2) Rent explosive detecting equipment from the FBI?
- (3) Travel south under an assumed name?

2. - You are running off your fanzine using a friend's mimeo, and a hard turn wrenches the machine so hard that it cracks. Would you --

- (1) Take out all the books the library has on welding?
- (2) Rent a bullwhip and claim that the mimeo would have cracked anyway?
- (3) Travel south under an assumed name?

3. - You are so excited while balloting for next years con site that accidentally you write down the name of another town instead of your own (which has a good chance of getting the vote.) You suspect one of your home-town friends saw you. Would you --

- (1) Demand a recount?
- (2) Insist that this is a big deal and that everything will eventually be made up to everybody?
- (3) Travel south under an assumed name?

4. - You suddenly realize that your giant-sized annish contains so much dirty pornography that you will either have to spend hours with scissors or junk the whole, costly stack. You are three months behind on this. Would you --

- (1) Include a note commenting on the cleverness of all those holes?
- (2) Treat the postmaster to a steak dinner?
- (3) Travel south under an assumed name?

5. - You sell two stories to the pros and your friends want you to pay some of the debts you owe them. Would you --

- (1) Point out that there will be very little left after income taxes?
- (2) Bury your strongbox in the dark of the moon?
- (3) Travel south under an assumed name?

6. - You are fired from your job because you (if female) type too many stencils on company time or (if male) type too many stencils on company time. Would you --

- (1) Inquire about long-term rents on skid-row?
- (2) Protest bitterly about it in your own fanzine?
- (3) Hitchhike south under an assumed name?

7. - You accidentally lend a friend some hektograph ink for his mimeo. A day later a rock wrapped in an odd-looking fanzine page smashes your living-room window. Would you --

- (1) Visit your friend and swoon over the striking effect of the ink?
- (2) Phone the police about burglars?
- (3) Travel south under an assumed name?

8. - Your spouse donates some prewar pulps which you almost hocked your soul to borrow, to a Boy Scout waste paper drive. Your friend returns for them. Would you --

- (1) Claim sudden and complete amnesia?
- (2) Have your spouse let him in while you are phoning the police about burglars?
- (3) Travel south under an assumed name?

9. - You find a pro-ed object to a racy article you printed about him and is suing you. Would you --

- (1) Claim that you were so desperate for material that you ran off the article without reading it?
- (2) Admit you are a lousy proof-reader?
- (3) Travel south under an assumed name?

10. - You are a Frisco fan and you suggest to a pal that perhaps fandom really wanted to go to Philly in '53. Next week, as you enter a club meeting, you are greeted with shouts of "traitor" and "hang him". Would you --

- (1) Tell them about your twin brother?
- (2) Denounce your former pal as a communist spy and rabble-rouser?
- (3) Travel north under an assumed name?

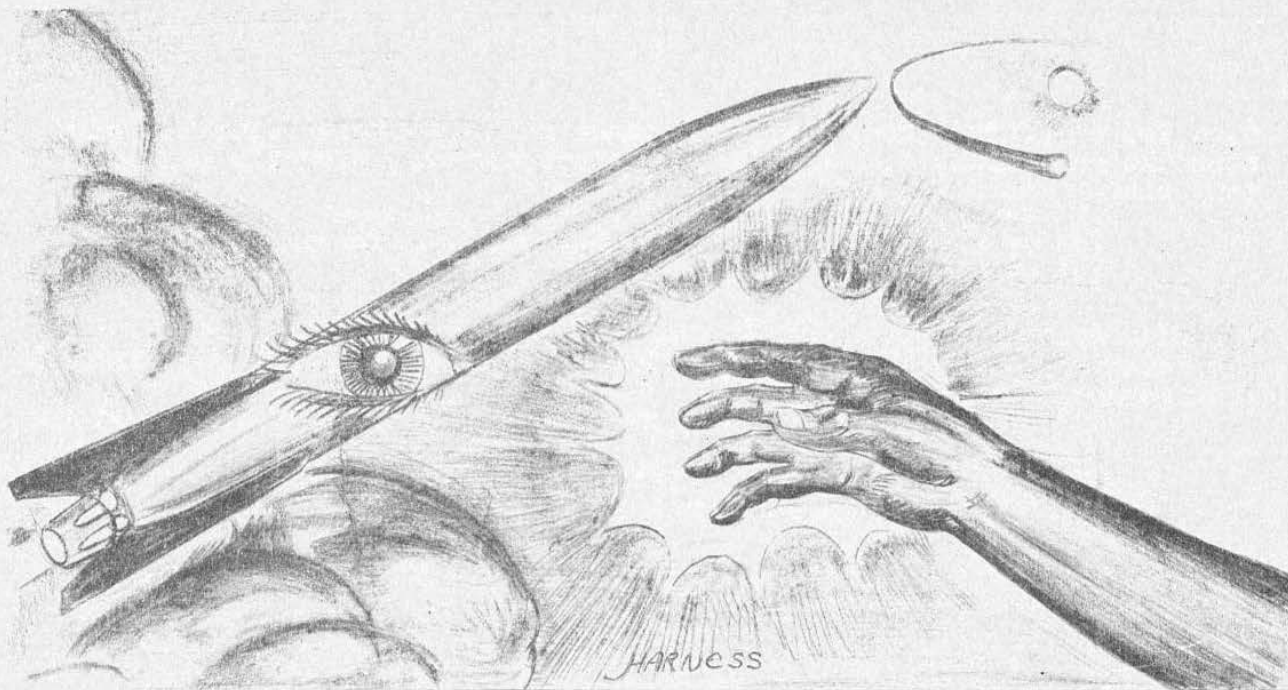
Now for the scoring. Count up the number of one's, two's and three's you checked; the category with the greatest number wins and places you as to type below. In case of ties, consider yourself lost.

(1) This category denotes a clever brain and an aversion to any hard work at all. To succeed in this group you need great acting ability and a mind that works under stress. As a rule, this category won't succeed.

(2) A person in this category will have to work hard in the follow-up in order to make his decisions stick; he must have stamina. But even this will seldom avail against such hopeless situations.

(3) If you are in here, you have chosen a rather final way out and should beware of hasty decisions. But since you will eventually be found out, this category offers little help either.

Let us hope that none of these situations ever develop!



With the suspension of VANATIONS, many readers will be without any major contact with the fan world. I therefor recommend the following fanzines. A complete coverage of fandom will be obtained with all of them. If your finances are limited, then I recommend the first 7 as these are 7th fandom fanzines and the coming leaders of the fan publications. If that is still too many, then I heartily recommend the first two, for these, along with VANATIONS were recently voted as the top three fanzines in fandom and most nearly resemble VANATIONS in quality, diversity and editorial policy.

VEGA

Joel Nydahl
119 S. Front St.,
Marquette, Mich.,

SCIENCE FANTASY BULLETIN

Harlan Ellison
Apt. 616, 12701 Shaker Blvd
Cleveland 20, Ohio.

SF

John L. Magnus, Jr.
9612 Second Ave.,
Silver Springs, Md.

COSMAG

Ian T. Macauley
4118 W. 143rd St.,
Cleveland 11, Ohio

STF & NONSENSE

Jack Harness
555 Westover Rd.,
Pittsburgh 34, Pa.,

MOTE

Bob Peatrowsky
Box 634,
Norfolk, Nebra.,

PENDULUM

Bill Venable
610 Park Place,
Pittsburgh 9, Pa.,

FANTASIAS

David English
63 W. 2nd St.,
Dunkirk, N.Y.

TYRANN

Norbert Hirschorn
853 Riverside Drive.,
New York 32, N.Y.

CHIGGER PATCH OF FANDOM

Nan Gerding, Box 484, Roseville, Ill.,

(LUCK is learning that Roger Dee is really Roger D. Aycock. LUCK is having Roger D. Aycock on the mailing list of Vn. LUCK was having Roger Dee write me a letter commenting on Vn., and thus giving me an opening wedge through which I could obtain this article. My thanks to Ian Macauley for his kind help and co-operation in getting this article, and my sincere thanks to Roger Dee for sacrificing the time and effort to write it and send it to me.....NGB)

OF BEMS AND BENEFITS

by ROGER DEE

Science fiction may or may not have come a long way, depending upon the viewpoint of its critics, but there have appeared during recent years several viable mutations of the original strain which have extended its influence to new brackets of reader-ship and which have permanized it as a genre, I think, for keeps.

Some of the branching-outs are natural benefits of general growth and must have come sooner or later, no matter what the popular reaction to them, because they recognized and met longfelt wants. Others were no more than adolescent growing-pains and died out at once, or are in the process of dying; still others seem to have sprung directly from happy inspiration and these tickle my eccentric funny-bone to its ultimate ganglion.

One of the happiest of these, to me -- and to most of whose fond memories of popular science fiction reach way back into the mists of its genesis -- was Stanley G. Weinbaum's introduction of the Benevolent Bem. I may be caught up easily here (or at any other point before I'm through) but so far as I can recall, Weinbaum's departure from the tentacled and conquistadorial extra-terrestrial gave Science Fiction its first real escape from the straightjackets of stereotype. The concept introduced has become a permanent point of takeoff for writers of science fiction, and will be as long as the stuff is written. I can't recall (since I don't collect science fiction or own an eidetic memory) just how long ago it was that I first met Tweerl and the pyramid-builders and the wheelbarrow-pushers of Weinbaum's MARTIAN ODYSSEY, but I'll certainly never forget them.

Acceptance of the Benevolent Bem led naturally to escape from the old grim-and-gory style of plotting and opened up a much broader field to the science fiction writer. Time was when science fiction was all but compelled to follow the limitations imposed upon the detective story -- which today has become the murder story for the reason that only murder seems worth the reader's trouble -- and was in real danger of degenerating into the invasion story pure and simple, plentifully studded with desperation, death and derring-do. For what, went the then-current logic, could catch and hold the reader's interest better than the ultimate peril, which is not vicarious personal danger but menace to Man himself? Some very good stuff was published on that theme (still is being published, for that

matter), but there's a point of diminishing returns; the old Super Science Stories ran a lot of first-rate material on that line, but I think that the magazine's policy of sticking too closely to the dread-and-desperation slant eventually cost it the interest of its readers.

And, of course, with the increasingly popular swing from grim to general, the lighter sort of story -- satire, humor and sometimes outright burlesque -- came into its own. It's still rising, and will grow until it finds its particular balance in the science-fictional scheme of things. It needed a certain admixture of fantasy in a great many instances -- which delighted some readers and infuriated others -- but it struggled through to a general acceptance. It has become increasingly welcome in a world whose current newspaper headlines read more and more like the plot of a 1930 atomic-holocaust yarn, and there's no doubt any more that it's here to stay. Long may it live!

Want a concrete example of the trend? Look at the cover of the July issue of GALAXY, whereon our intrepid space voyager having braved the perils of space to set foot on alien soil, finds himself not assailed by tentacled alien monsters but properly chewed out instead by a native green-skinned herdsman for squashing a purple cow. It's the first out-and-out humorous cover I recall having seen on a science fiction magazine, and -- shrill screams of protest from the literal-minded notwithstanding -- I'm all for it. Salah.

A final observation which may bring still more irate criticism from those readers who judge their stories by weight of plot and sex-appeal of slant rather than by accurate characterization and soundness of development, is this: personally, I am moved to cheer from the housetops the better quality of writing that has made itself felt in recent years. The trend away from stereotyped plotting and development is responsible here, giving a real talent room to try its wings, and as a consequence the quality has gone up sharply -- and will continue to go up. Without implying any criticism of older writers, many of whom kept science fiction alive during its doldrums and who are still among today's best, I find it a downright pleasure to read the work of such talented latter-day entrants to the field (to name, hastily, four of many) as Richard Matheson, Robert Sheckly, Philip K. Dick and Allan E. Nourse.

Here, I think, is a circumstance which will help science fiction to establish itself on a basis of acceptance as wide and as stable as any other form of popular literature -- the excellence of writing that makes itself more and more evident. The average writer of pulp whodunits and sagebrush sagas need not know the difference of application; for example, between amiable, amicable and friendly; nor even, for that matter, between species and feces. But the science fiction writer of today must know, because his reader knows -- and the reader, in any final analysis, is the lad who determines thumbs up or thumbs down on that writer's future.

You don't need to be told how that decision is made, because you make it every time you buy -- or don't buy -- a science fiction magazine.

Roger Dee

FIERY 'TODD'?

ART HUSEBOE

sand sloping gently
like the curves of a sleeping woman,
haze that will never disperse
though a tempest blow till time's end,
formed from grains so fine
they will never settle into any fixed shape,
the dull, hot blaze of two suns looking down
through the eternally blowing wind,
in such a way that never,
in all the length and breadth of the land,
could be found one faint, vagrant shadow
or trace of shade--

except in one corner
where even the shifting sand slopes
seemed more charged
with monotonous violence,
where there stood,
as tall as the land was flat,
one lone pillar.

to this dead spot
came the travelers of the stars,
of many strange shapes
and in many strange ways,
to view and puzzle over the black post
and the simple symbol
that graced its summit.

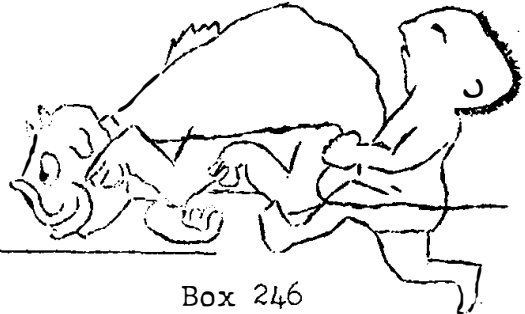
young and old from races young and old,
the dwellers of the distant worlds
looked, pondered and puzzled
over the meaning of what they saw.

most closed their minds to a meaningless enigma,
many speculated idly,
but few knew the significance of that sign--
a cross.

Art Huseboe.

(I hope you folks don't mind too much the size of this column, but you see, I had to fill this issue up with something. Then, too, you just might get as big a kick out of these letters as I did.....NGB)

OMITTI



A JOKE IS A JOKE IS A JOKE

Box 246
Rochester, Texas,

Dear Norman,

Thanks for the latest VANATIONS, and thanks for the AIR WONDER STORIES as a prize. I will probably trade it for something else on the fan-swap market; I don't care much for the old stuff. I meant to write and tell you not to send me the prize, but since you did, thanks a lot anyway.

WHERE do you get your information? I quote; "Robert Bloch, age unknown, has recently had two books published under the pen-name of Wilson Tucker....."

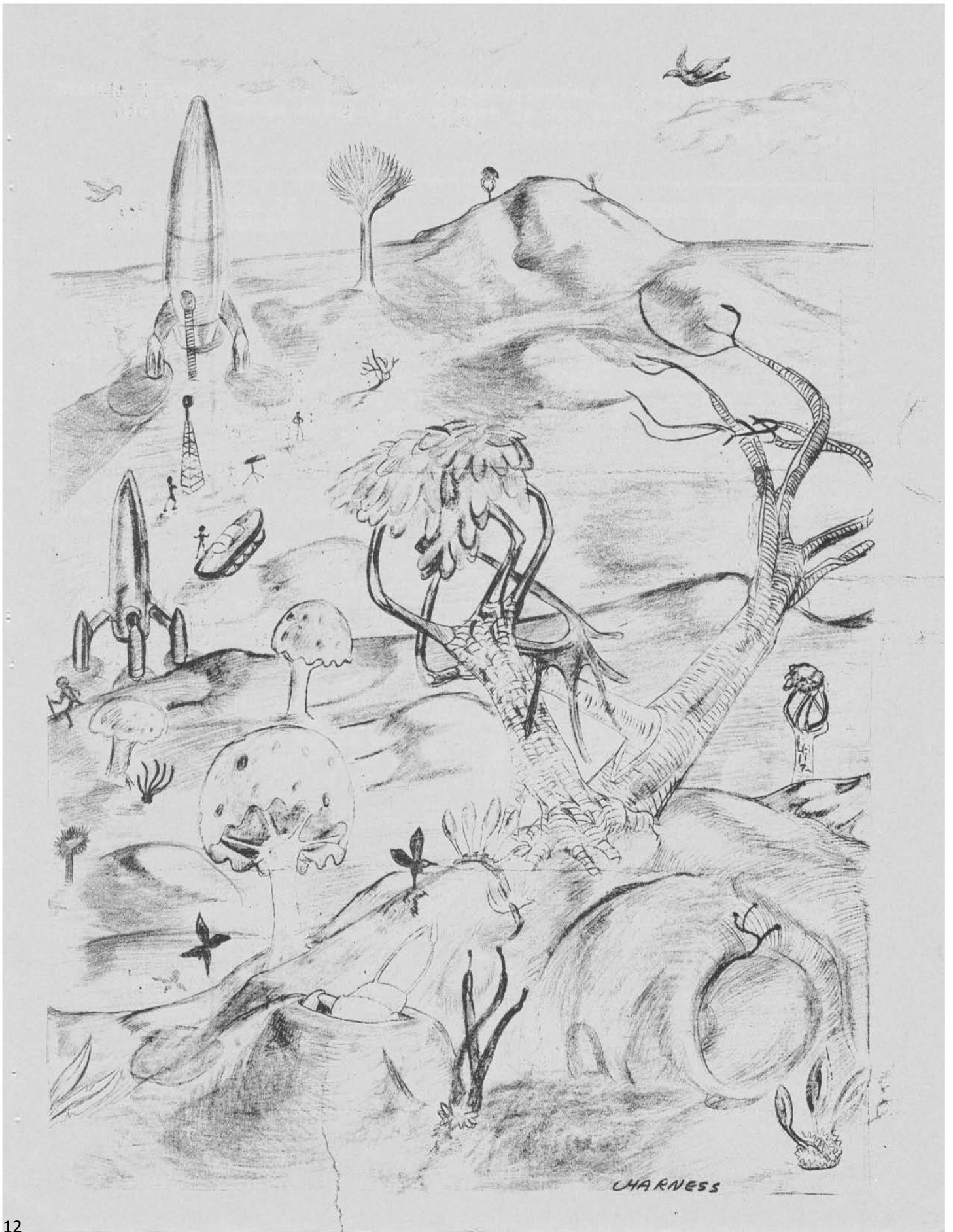
Look, Norman; All the members of Hoffman's group jokes about Proxyboo----F'rinstance, claim to have written stories by van Vogt, Bradbury, etc.....AS A JOKE, because other members know better!

Robert Bloch, who is, to my PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE in his thirties, maybe forties, has been writing stories for WEIRD TALES since 1946, maybe before that....I didn't start reading until 1946.

Wilson Arthur Tucker, also known as "Bob", the publisher of Bloomington News Letter, now SFNL, is the author of CITY IN THE SEA and THE LONG LOUD SILENCE, recently; but he also wrote several detective stories in a series about Charles Horne; THE CHINESE DOLL, THE STALKING MAN, and others whose titles I forget at the moment. I have read them all, and they are quite good. I have seen pictures of both Bloch and Tucker. They are nothing alike. They live in different towns. I've corresponded with Tucker, and I know others who correspond with Bloch. Neither one fits the pattern of a child genius. Neither has been a "fan" for a good many years. Bob Tucker is a member of FAPA. Robert Bloch is an oldfan of Forry Ackerman's day. "Wilson Tucker" is not a pen-name, but a simon-pure real name. "Bob Tucker" is a fan pen-name for Wilson Tucker, just as Redd Boggs is a pen name for Dean W. Boggs.

Marion Zimmer Bradley

(I had your letter with me at the MidWestCon and I could have shown it to either Bloch or Tucker when I met them again for the third time. Or, I could have mailed it to either of them when I got home as I am



in a haphazard state of correspondence with both of them. But I thought they'd get a bigger kick out of seeing it in print since they both receive VANATIONS. Satisfied.....?)

HE DARED ME TO PRINT THIS LETTER

15 Friends Ave.,
Haddonfield, N.J.,

Dear Norman,

Thought that the pieces (fiction) by Crane and Cox were very good. I don't particularly like Chappell's play "The Tree" because it all too greatly resembled a story by Eric Frank Russell in a back issue of FANTASTIC called "The Sin of Hyacinth Peuch". Also didn't think your opening comments were appropriate -- in that play or the piece by Hayes. And while I mentioned that "thing" by Hayes, why in heck did you use that? Are you hard up for material? Things like that belong in Fate, not fanzines. Not yours anyway. Oh, well; editorial taste, I guess. Chappell is usually good; in my opinion this was a poor example of his work. Maybe he should stick to short stories.

I was a bit disappointed about the artwork this issue. That mess by Huseboe was awful and rates my vote for the worst of the issue. Tell me; what has that to do with stf? Even Naaman has slipped a little. Noted a cartoon by Naaman in Madge this month.

The poetry was ok. "How to Write a Letter...." was very enjoyable. Another gripe.....Wyzkowski's article was fairly miserable with your comments; without them, it would have been terrible.

Now to the main gripe. And it concerns the coming convention in Philly and your stupid argument with Lyle Kessler. How silly can you get? I think that Lyle was completely in the right in asking you to give the con a boost. Maybe to you he seemed a little assuming, maybe so; but for gosh sakes, that's no reason to make an ass of yourself in taking apart every little sentence of his letter and twisting the meaning hopelessly. When your circulation reaches that of the Progress Report and you start using the photo-offset method of reproduction, your ad rates would stand up. Even those used by the Report are a bit stiff, but you sure are simple to state yours as the same for sake of argument. My parting comment.....

DON'T BE BITTER.....RECONSIDER!

Jerry Hopkins

(I shan't comment on your opinions of Vn. because as editor of the magazine under discussion I am strictly neutral. I try to remain neutral and to publish not what I like but what I think you will like. However, for the umpteenth time I will explain, in words of two syllables, the definition of the word "fanzine". As I understand it, "Fanzine" means "an amateur fan published magazine". Similarly, "prozine" means "a professionally published magazine". "prozine" does not mean a magazine by and about pros. Neither does "fanzine" mean a magazine by and about fans.

If Lyle Kessler had written to me in an orthodox, straight-forward style and asked me for a quote on the advertising rates for Vn. then I would have given him reasonable figures based on the number and type of my circulation and my over-all costs per issue. But he didn't....)

THE STYLE SOUNDS FAMILIAR.....

1284 Monterey Ave.,
Berkeley, Calif.,

Hi Normy,

This is my first letter to a fanzine. I am a young stffan. I will be fifteen on August 3, (I expect a card!) I'm in the 9th grade and I take Algebra, Latin, English, Religion, P.E., History and Family Living. I just got my report card and it was all "B"'s.

My cat just had kitens; two pure white, one black and white and one black striped. The black one looks real peechy keen.

Your zine is very nice. It doesn't come out often enough, tho. The drawings are horrible. Papaer horrid. The staples don't hold together. DOPRI stunk. The questions in You Asked? were just plain stupid. Song for Robots stunk. The layout's terrible. The Tree was icky.

I really can't understand why you pick on poor Mr. Kessler so. After reading your letter to him I think his feelings will be hurt.

H.T.W.A.F.-l.T.A.E.O.A.S.F.M.O.Y.T.C.B.A.P.P.I.T.P.O.Y.C.H. was good. Bergeron's stuff stunk. H.R.C.Y.G. stunk. W.stf M.T.M. was good but it could have been done without the inserted comments. K. M. S., K.M.S., had no plot. Do you have to use black ink? And the least you could do is use purple paper.

A Reader,

Arlene Brennan.

(It is rather ironic. Your letter was forwarded down to me while I was attending the HEcon. I didn't open it at that time because it was all wadded up and had 15 staples stuck through it. It next came to light about a week later when I was staying with Doug Graves. Doug was pawing through my stuff and he came across it and asked permission to open it. I was busy at the time and said okay. He opened it and read it and his resulting laughter was such that I thought I was at Frenchmans Flats. The irony is that your letter was written in a style that was suggested in an article by Douglas Graves - and he was the first person to open and read your letter! This could only happen in fandom.)

MORE OUTSPOKEN THAN I

73 Sadler Ave.,
St. Vital, Manitoba,

Dear Norman,

The cover was the best illo in the book, but the other illos were also good. The article by Douglas Graves was very good. The other articles weren't worth much. The two fiction stories were well written

and the play was horribly good. The departments were okay, but what I thought was best was OMTPI. It's about time someone told the Americans where to get off. Your reply to Mr. Kessler's letter was most fitting. The Americans have a habit of titling things "World" this and that and then limiting them strictly to the good, (Ha! Ha!) old United States.

All in all you have a wonderful mag, and it is a shame to see you stopping publication. Oh, well. Maybe you will start again someday.

Allan Bjorkman

(I, of course, don't agree with your analysis of the situation. There is a tendency to title things "world" when they are merely international in nature, but let's not start a war over it! The word "world" is used for the prestige connotations involved and I have no doubt that when we get the news of Man reaching the Moon, people will use the term "Inter-stellar". Don't blame the American's too much - remember, Toronto, Canada was a host city to a "world" S-F convention!)

THIS GUY IS GOOD!

1732 S. 8th St.,
Sheboygan, Wisc.,

Dear Mr. Browne:

Upon receipt of the April issue of VANATIONS I immediately padlocked my establishment, leaped nimbly upon my underground getaway mole and, setting a course of 197 degrees headed for a wild and secluded spot just 85 yards distant where I "surfaced" exactly eight and one half seconds later (quite a good rate of bore, is it not?) so that I might peruse its pages without having some mere customer reading over my shoulder.

Part of the precaution was necessitated by the fact that, after reading the previous issue you had sent me, I wasn't sure whether I had fallen into a maelstrom which was being fed with rotting bones and brain tissue of a species of bipeds yet unknown to science!

However, after scanning the April issue I will go so far as to state that there appears to be a slight amount of sanity still remaining around the edges, especially in the pools and eddies where the imbecilic residue has settled to the bottom.

Comes now the startling announcement that, after much deliberation and floor pacing, (and upon the advice of my attorney) I will remit to you my last piece of silver which, if you have a sufficiently large magnifying glass, you will find securely welded to the lower left hand corner of this thesis. Do not spend it with reckless abandon!

E. L. Goose

(Most people, in their first letter to me, just say "Liked your zine, enclosed is 25¢." and let it go at that. Your letter says essentially

page 14 page

the same thing but Man! What a style! Your letter style is reminiscent of the writing styles of such top humorists as Grennell, Bloch, and Willis. My hope is that seeing your effort and name in print will have the desired effect on you and bring you into fandom. We can use you!)

WELL, WE CAN DREAM CAN'T WE?

1614 Collingwood Ave.,
San Jose 25, Calif.,

Dear Norman;

I'm sorry to hear that VANATIONS is folding with the next issue. You've been getting better with each issue, so I hope at least you'll go out in a blaze of glory. That is to say, Kodochrome front and back covers, inside and out; the best dinosaur parchment paper; 8 color drawings by Bok, Cartier and Morey; and 1,000,000,000 $\frac{1}{2}$ pages. Also typesetting done by the man who wrote The Lord's Prayer on the head of a pin. This will cause all fans to go out of circulation. Finally the prozines will shut down, while you are sitting safe up in Canada, surrounded by stacks of AMAZING, living your life happily away on the money taken in by Vn.

Page Brownton

(If all the American prozines folded, I'd be able to sit back quite happily surrounded by stacks of BRIEF FANTASTIC TALES, Canada's answer to the American prozine flood. BFT takes the prozine trend the other way - it is vest pocket size and only 10¢. And Oh, Joy! I beat Taurasi to the big news!!!)

"...I don't see any WHALE!!"

BY FRED CHAPPELL

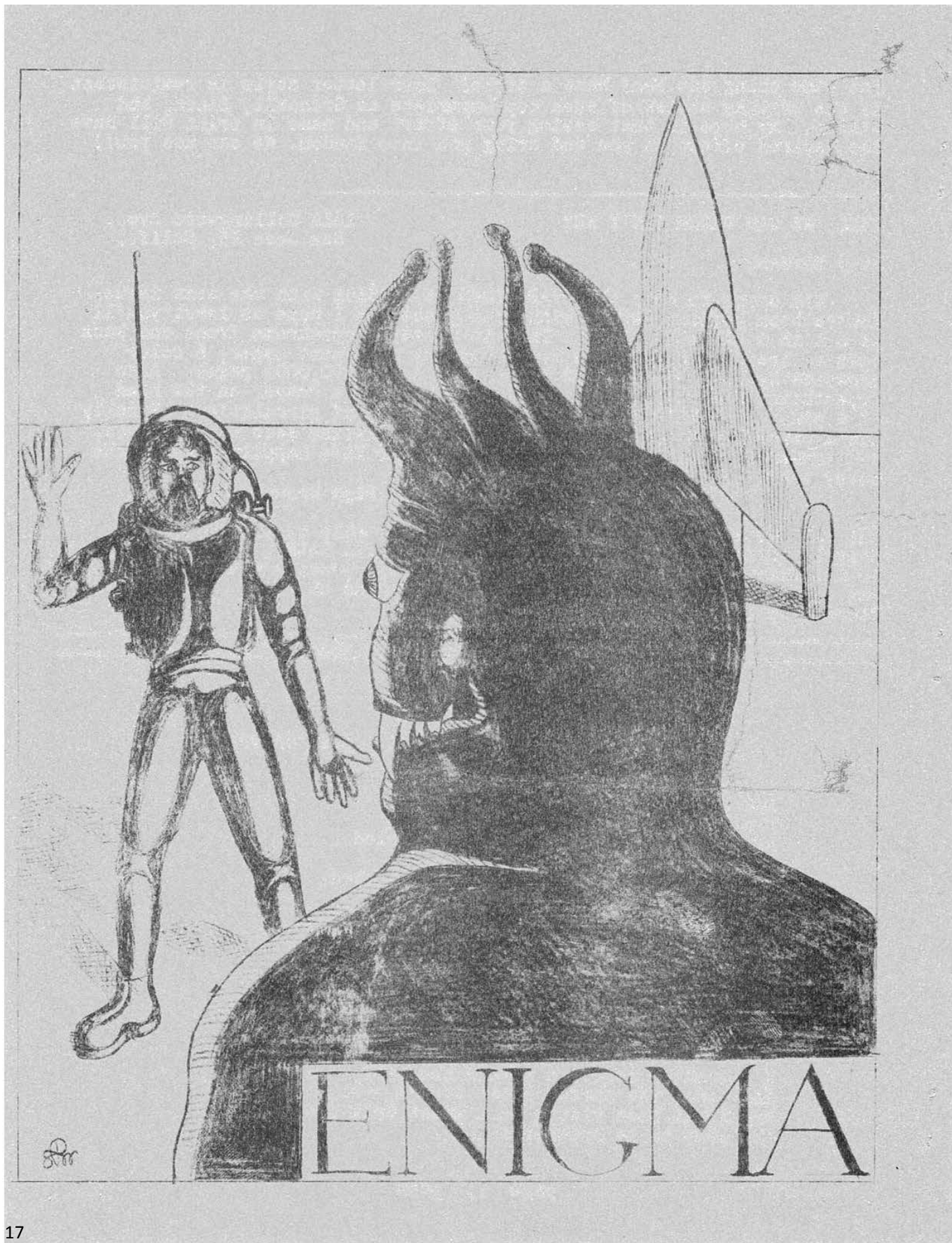
I lost the cruel beat of the City,
And perceived a wondrous world ---
Where nature yet abode, undaunted,
And the flag of iron was still furled.

I saw real stars, diamond-like and hard;
I felt the glow of a pregnant dawn.
And though the silence stood unshattered,
I was told, "The soul is not gone!"

The sky developed bluely with time,
The land drew the sun's rays down ---
The earth was not dirt, here ---
And the earth was rich and brown.

I opened my door and beheld the City,
And heard its shrill metal scream ---
For I had been victim to a great Grim Jest,
And prey to an opium dream.

page 15 page



NO FORM OR SHAPE

Richard A. Kirs

Once, walking by the shore
Not of the true ocean, but a bay
Sheltered by an island that reached out
To the horizons of my sight
So far, so broad
That even the ocean's mightiest roar
Was swallowed and mocked by the distance
By this calm water
Sparkled and shattered by an infant wind
Into a thousand pinpoints that cascaded
In a rippled rush of foam
Up to my very feet, I found
A thing that turned and churned and rolled
With a pale inner life
So blind and horrible that I smiled
And felt a rush of titanic elation
Until I saw
Its weird pulsation weave
A slow harmonic thrall that spoke
Of ultimate content.
Blindly
I struck, and watched as it dissolved
Into a vaporous thing that boiled
Beneath the sliding foam. I turned away
And drove it from my sight
Thinking, I feel
I see I taste I know I live
I breathe I retch I bleed why
Is it as alive?
I turned and walked away and did not dare
To look
Back and perhaps see
What feral shape should cuddle to its breast
The thing I killed
That slimy smooth loathsome blob.
I hated it for being as alive as I
But it is not, it is not, it is not, it is not, it
Is
And I am so afraid of the calm quiet water
Of the bay.

(CREATIVE IMAGINATION is when you get a particularly intriguing idea and send it down to Robert Bloch in outline form. LUCK is when you get the idea back; fully developed in article form....NGB)

POE AND ME

by ROBERT BLOCH

In recent months, the science fiction world has been set back on its heels by one of the strangest writing combinations ever to sell a story. Separately, the two collaborators are well-known and well-liked, but when they got together and wrote "The Lighthouse" for FANTASTIC then it was indeed something.

Never before have Robert Bloch and Edgar Allen Poe collaborated together in writing a story. To bring you the inside truth; the story behind the story on this unique literary event; I have taken the liberty of questioning Mr. Bloch in regard to it. My questions and his answers are listed below:

- Q. IN GENERAL, HOW DID YOU LIKE COLLABORATING WITH MR. POE ON A STORY?
- A. Fine. He didn't ask for a split on the check.
- Q. DID YOU EXPERIENCE ANY TROUBLE WHILE COLLABORATING WITH MR. POE?
- A. Not as much as I usually have when I've attempted to work with other amateurs.
- Q. DURING YOUR COLLABORATION, DID YOU FIND MR. POE TO BE TEMPERAMENTAL AT ALL?
- A. Quite the contrary. He was so quiet that at times I scarcely knew he was around.
- Q. DID MR. POE HAVE ANY ECCENTRICITIES WHICH FANDOM MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN HEARING ABOUT?
- A. Well, one thing....he kept looking over his shoulder and claiming he saw a raven. This was absurd.
- Q. DO YOU THINK MR. POE FOUND YOU ECCENTRIC IN ANY WAY?
- A. He seemed to. I kept looking over my shoulder and claiming I saw a black cat. He said that was absurd.
- Q. DOES MR. POE HAVE ANY BAD HABITS YOU FOUND IRRITATING?
- A. Yes. He drinks Amontillado right out of the bottle.
- Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY BAD HABITS THAT MR. POE FOUND IRRITATING?

- A. Yes. I drink Amontillado right out of the cask.
- Q. WAS THIS THE FIRST TIME YOU HAD EVER MET MR. POE?
- A. Heavens to Betsy, no! He and I met many years ago at the house of an old-time fan name of Usher.
- Q. DID YOU TAKE A LIKING TO MR. POE?
- A. Of course. The kid shows promise of developing into a real writer. A sort of Edgar Allen Pro.
- Q. DO YOU THINK HE TOOK A LIKING TO YOU?
- A. Why not? I'm very loveable, really. Beneath these ragged trousers there beats a heart of gold.
- Q. DID YOU USE AN ORTHODOX METHOD OF COLLABORATION....EACH WRITING A WORD OF THE STORY IN ALTERNATION? OR DID YOU USE AN UNORTHODOX METHOD, SUCH AS WRITING A SENTENCE IN TURN?
- A. We went further than that. We took turns writing each letter of each word. This got pretty tiresome, so along about the middle, he handled all the vowels and I handled all the consonants. Then he complained of vowel trouble so we took turns writing syllables.
- Q. IS IT TRUE THAT MR. ZIFF OF ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLICATIONS REGARDS MR. POE AS "QUITE THE UP-AND-COMING YOUNG WRITER"?
- A. Yes, but wait until he hears about Jules Verne!
- Q. A VICIOUS RUMOR HAS IT THAT MR. POE WROTE THE FIRST HALF OF "THE LIGHTHOUSE" AND YOU WROTE THE LAST HALF. WOULD YOU CARE TO MAKE A STATEMENT COMMENTING ON THIS?
- A. I actually wrote four-fifths of the story. Mr. Poe drank the other fifth.
- Q. IS IT TRUE THAT YOU AND MR. POE ISOLATED YOURSELVES IN A LIGHTHOUSE WHILE WRITING THE STORY?
- A. This is an error, based on the fact that Mr. Poe and I shared the same quarters during our collaboration. What I actually said was that "Mr. Poe and I have set up in a light house-keeping apartment together."
- Q. IN CLOSING, ARE THERE ANY FURTHER STATEMENTS YOU WISH TO MAKE REGARDING MR. POE, YOURSELF, AND YOUR COLLABORATION?
- A. It was a pleasant experience, but next time I'm going to collaborate with Kathleen Winsor!

Robert Bloch

(You see, I have to print this. Lyell Crane lives in Australia and the airmail rate from here to there is 50¢ per quarter ounce. Thus, the cost to return this mss would be around \$2.00.....NGB)

CALCULATED DEATH

by LYELL CRANE



The business took on really high level significance the day that Roger Vention rushed screaming from the specially prepared room, his eyes protruding stalk-like in front of him, remnants of his half-bitten tongue hanging grotesquely from the side of his mouth, to crash down the back stair well to his death.

Knowledge could be imagined which would drive weak people to the retreat of insanity, strong people can be shaken, but Roger Vention had been declared by psychologists as not only in the genius category, but in addition, a masterpiece of stability.

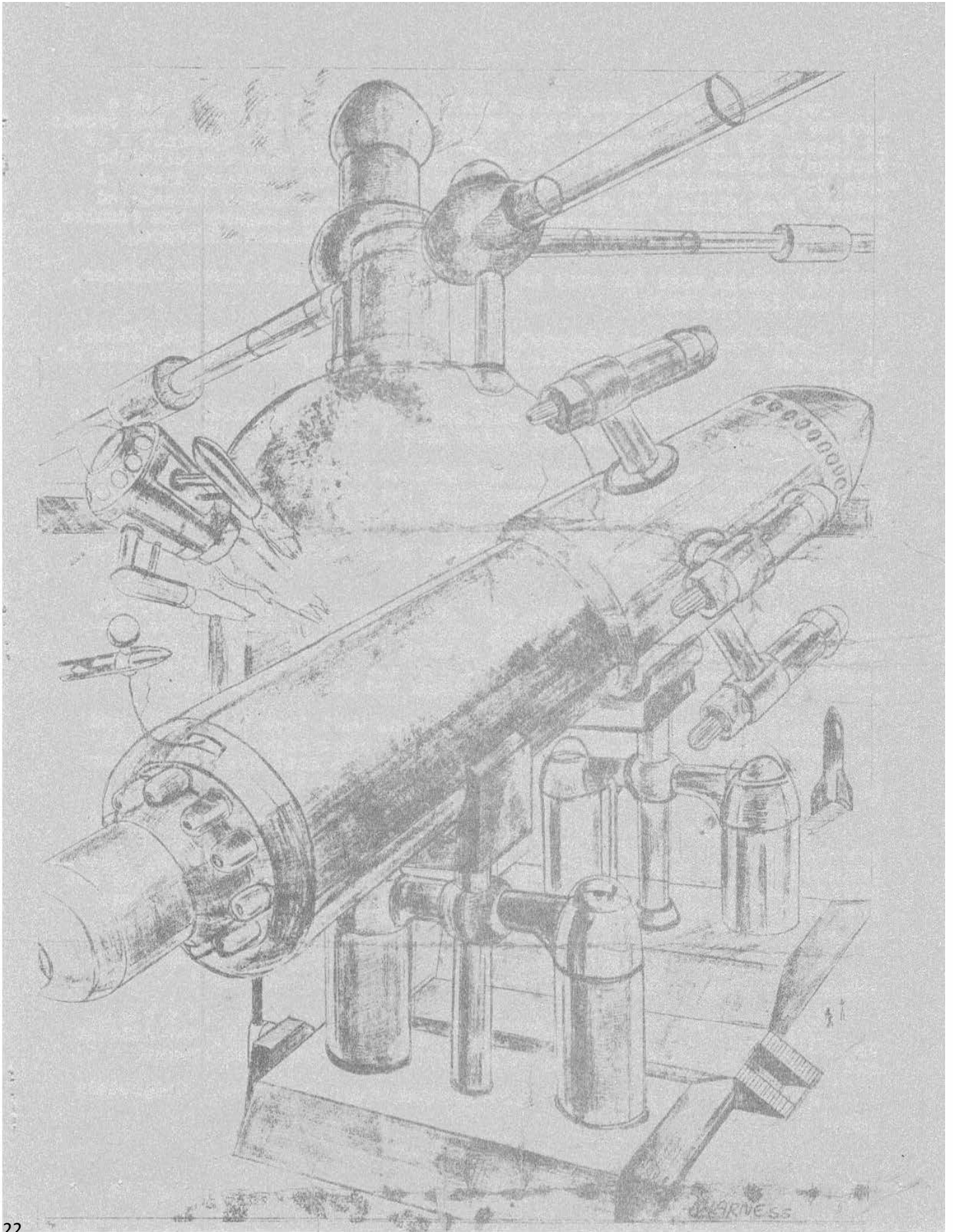
Summing up the progress, or rather lack of it to date, Conway Firth half muttered to his assistant: "That's the eighth man driven completely mad in the last month; merely because he tried to translate the sacred writings of the "Kropt" religious talisman, which had been employed in the initiation of all the Grue people of the planet Phug."

"I'd bet a million on Vention doing the job," replied Schmidt, a muscular and balding man of definite features, "now what in hell do we do; you know that the Prime Minister wants to know the answer, and we're the Department of Extra-Terrestrial Research you know!"

"Do I know?" snapped Firth, "Why I haven't slept in weeks." Crossing his legs, and pressing his pale thin hands to his domed and extensive forehead he continued: "Obviously no living man can do the complete translation and stay sane. We've got most of it done now, but it is the last part of the ceremony which causes even the strangest man to completely lose his reason, the words of the oath which all the Grue people were made to swear, in the presence of their high priesthood, on their coming of age."

"I wonder," pondered Schmidt, "What manner of entities these things must have been for all of them to have taken such an oath and survived. The whole species must have had a terrifically high mental stability."

"You think so?" replied Firth. "Remember though, that history shows that they became extinct eight thousand of our years ago, when their government mounted a space drive on their entire planet, and slowed it in its orbit around their sun to such an extent that it was attracted into that latter body to produce a great flash of extinction; so maybe even they were driven out of their right minds; completely as a race."



Two weeks later Conway Firth and his staff were present, with a bevy of top brass from the armed services, the Prime Minister, and crowds of lesser fry in attendance. The "DECODAR" machine, the Cybernetics Section's latest contribution to anti-espionage had been recruited to transfer the meaning of the mystic scratches on the platinum disc. A deathly hush filled the crowded hall as the machine slowly translated the earlier parts of the message, while busy clerks compared the results with the previous translation obtained by the now insane officers.

"It checks word for word so far" rasped Firth in a hushed whisper, "and now for the oath."

Slowly the machine approached the vital part of the script, slowly it started to scan the terrible words.... Suddenly there was a flash of light.

"All the fuses have blown" announced the head operator. "This has never happened before, that all fuses should blow at once."

Frenziedly he rushes around the machine looking for faults, and after an hour of testing, announces that the mechanism of the machine is OK, that it must have been the implications of the message.

"Reinstall the fuses" announced the Prime Minister. "We haven't any more time to waste."

Skilled technicians worked over the twenty five enormous switchboards, the four keyboards and the endless stacks of power packs, amplifiers and other sections in the hundred and eighty five tons of minute electronic equipment which made up the cells of the great brain; not to mention the many tons of framework and other structures.

Three times the fuses all blew. It was well into the night, and many heads were nodding with sleep when the order came: "Replace all fuses and fine leads with thick copper wire. We must have the answer even at the risk of damaging parts of the machine."

The next day, the adjustments made, the hushed gathering waited, breathless. The machine, retraced the earlier part of the script and produced the identical translation up to the point where the high priest says to the novice: "Repeat this solemn and horrible oath, that you see here inscribed upon this plaque, and leave forever the careless ease of childhood behind you."

The machine stalled a little, motors whined, globes flashed, and others burned out; the occasional cable glowed red and fused.

"Da ta de da" wrote the machine. "Da de da! Ta de da" it continued. "Blurp urp de slurp" it prattled on, ceaselessly, the idiotic and meaningless words forming in the letters of the typed output.

"My God!" gasped Firth, "The machine's gone mad now. Completely mad!"

For three days and nights the machine continued its reasonless blitherings, punctuated every few seconds by soft explosions as further parts of the equipment fused, and more valves burned themselves out. Nothing that the experts could do would prevent the process of its self conducted computation of destruction.

Came the early dawn of October the fifth, and the Prime Minister rose from his chair. "Well Gentlemen," he stated, "We're gathered here to receive suggestions for getting us out of our difficulties. As you all know, certain unfriendly forces in a certain country across our borders have been actively threatening war against us for many years, merely awaiting an excuse to start. The finding of the relics of the Grue people and in particular that terrible talisman has finally provided the excuse. Their representative claims that we are monopolising the knowledge of space, which should rightly belong to the whole human race, and that they will attack unless we hand over all the material brought back from the planet Phug for their examination."

Here the Prime Minister paused, and drank a little water before continuing: "As you well know, the destruction of our thinking machine "DECODAR" will put us in the background as far as army intelligence is concerned, while they, I know from a reliable source, have one almost identical unit to ours, in full working order, which not only decodes everything but feeds all information directly into the firing mechanisms of their guided missiles. In short, we are lost, unless someone can suggest a solution, and you've all had one week in which to do so."

Dead silence greeted this statement for several seconds. Then Wally Balloo mounted the platform, approached the Prime Minister and whispered into his ear. The Prime Minister's face brightened, he gleefully clapped his hands, and dismissed the gathering saying: "Gentlemen, we have the answer", and three days after handing the disputed talisman over to the unfriendly nation, that nation disappeared completely under a deathly hail of its own guided missiles.

LYELL CRANE

FILLER #231

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Two weeks passed and the mss still hadn't arrived so I phoned long distance to Cleveland and asked Harlan what the score was. I told him that at that time I was a month behind in publishing this issue. He promised to have the article in my hands within a week. So I waited, and waited and waited and still the no mss did not arrive.

Other than the fact that Vn. is supposedly bi-monthly and the cover is dated July, there is still another deadline. For you see, on Aug. 16th I am making the move that was the original reason for the suspension of this magazine; the date of this writing is Aug. 9th; and it takes me a good week to assemble and mail an issue. You're not reading two good articles; and VARIATIONS #6 is six weeks late; and I'm disgusted with fandom in general; and now you know why.....

Norman G. Browne

Lee Hoffman, Joel Nydahl, Hal Shapiro, Harlan Ellison, Gregg Calkins, Robert Bloch, Neil Blum, Sam Mines, Walt Kelly, Milton Berle, Paul Cox, Walt Willis, Marion Cox, Redd Boggs, Dave Ish, Rich Ellsbery, Dean A. Grennell, Bill Venable, Audie Murphy, Bob Hope, Dick Ryan, Randall Garrett, Dave Kyle, Evelyn Gold, Bob Silverburg, Oscar Wilde, Arthur C. Clark, Fred Chappell, Ambrose Bierce, Jack Harness, Bill Stavdal, Don Cantin, Ron Fleshman, Charles Burbee, Fred Christoff, Wally Balloo, Ray Palmer, Mickey Spillane, Dill Bignin, Bill Dignin, Dick Clarkson, Willy Ley, John Magnus, Charles Wells, Ted Wagner, Larry Anderson, etc.

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